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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call first on the speaker Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Niger and for Persons of Niger Nationality Living Abroad, His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki.

Mr. Mayaki (Niger) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the delegation of Niger, I should like Sir, to express my warm congratulations on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We regard your election as a just tribute to your country, the Republic of Ukraine, whose commitment to the ideals of our Organization is well known.

I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, who I am convinced will help you in the accomplishment of your delicate mission.

In addition, I wish to express to your predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, our deep appreciation for the remarkable work he did during his presidency.

To Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of our Organization, may I express my Government's full support and brotherly encouragement for the commendable action he is carrying out in order to promote greater cooperation between our peoples and nations in order to build a world of peace and progress.

Once again, Niger is pleased to take part in a session of the General Assembly, which is an ideal framework for the Member States of our Organization to debate, in a spirit of partnership, complex matters affecting the destiny of humanity.

We must all agree that over its 52 years of existence the United Nations has gained a more than honourable record in achieving its purposes, especially in the areas of peacekeeping, decolonization, and the promotion of, and respect for, human rights, as well as in the search for global solutions to the major problems of our times — development, the environment, population and the protection of women and children, to mention just a few.

The immense work accomplished so far is above all the result of our capacity to work together in our common interest and in the interest of future generations. Niger therefore believes that international cooperation, which is the basis of these major achievements, must be strengthened, because it is the source of stability and progress.

The maintenance of international peace and security, the primary purpose of our Organization, deserves everyone's special attention at a time when the international community, with the cold war finally ended, is getting down to establishing a new world order that strictly respects the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

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Niger welcomes the report presented by the Secretary-General last July on the reform of our Organization. We support this process and hope that it will provide synergy, giving the means and flexibility indispensable for the Organization if it is to meet the numerous challenges it faces at the dawn of the third millennium.

My delegation believes too that the Security Council must be reformed in order to make it more effective, given its responsibilities in the sphere of collective security. In particular, such reform must address the expansion of the Council on the basis of the principles of equitable geographical distribution and of the sovereign equality of States.

In the same vein, we consider that better handling of the emergencies that constantly arise in so many places must include an improvement in the Organization's capacity to deploy peacekeeping forces in a timely fashion wherever necessary.

Let me express Niger's deep concern at the conflicts and tensions in Africa and in the Middle East. Turning first to Africa, we note with distress that internal confrontations and disruptions are the main cause of the political instability in some countries and of the massive movements of refugees that are at the root of a tragic humanitarian crisis. Niger has a deep commitment to peace, and must once again urge the warring parties in the States concerned to renounce violence and engage in productive dialogue to find solutions to their disputes, thus restoring stability to their respective countries.

I take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to the people of Liberia, who after seven years of cruel war accepted the peace plan proposed by the States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Liberian people's will for peace is clearly reflected in their respect for the ceasefire and, above all, in the 19 July national elections, which were conducted in an atmosphere of calm and openness. I am pleased to pay tribute to the valuable role played by our great brother country, Nigeria, in the process of restoring peace to Liberia.

In Congo (Brazzaville), we hail the tireless efforts of neighbouring African countries, of the Organization of African Unity and of the United Nations to calm the situation. More than ever, that crisis highlights the urgent need to create an African peacekeeping force. I can today assure the Assembly that my country is fully prepared to contribute to the establishment of such a force, as it did in the cases of Rwanda, Burundi and Liberia.

Turning to the situation in Western Sahara, my country welcomes the recent agreement by the two parties; we hope that the referendum will take place in conditions of peace and calm.

To promote peace and security in the Middle East, the international community must pay sustained attention to the tension in the occupied Palestinian territories, which has been steadily rising since the Israeli Government decision to build a new settlement in occupied East Jerusalem. That Israeli decision endangers the peace process that began in Madrid on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and on the basis of the principle of land for peace.

In the face of that Israeli Government position, the international community has no choice but to redouble its efforts to secure dialogue and, above all, justice — which form the foundation of a peaceful future in the Middle East, along with the necessary exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, including the right to the establishment of an independent State, and scrupulous respect for agreements reached between the Israeli Government and the Palestine Liberation Organization on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Since its creation, the United Nations has always given high priority to disarmament, and in particular to the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. There has been good progress on this issue with the conclusion of a number of international instruments, the most notable of which, in our view, are the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Niger is deeply convinced that disarmament is an essential element in the maintenance of international peace and security and has acceded to those important agreements, which are aimed at preventing the development of nuclear weapons and of other weapons of mass destruction.

My country is keenly aware also of other, no less important, issues relating to illegal trafficking in small arms and to a complete ban on the anti-personnel mines that constitute a harsh scourge that continues to inflict unspeakable human suffering.

Civil wars and political upheaval in Africa have fostered the proliferation of illicit weapons. To collect and monitor weapons illicitly held by individuals, Niger has joined the United Nations and several neighbouring countries to take wide-ranging action against this scourge. On the domestic level, we created in 1994 a national commission for the collection and monitoring of illicit weapons.

My country is genuinely pleased also at the existence of regional disarmament initiatives, some of which have led to the conclusion of arrangements such as the Treaty on the Denuclearization of Africa.

In our view, it is essential to benefit from the climate of confidence and cooperation now prevailing on the international scene to give new impetus to multilateral negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. That is the only way to make progress towards building a safer world, which is a legitimate aspiration of all our peoples.

The tragic effects of poverty in a large number of countries merely exacerbate instability in the world.

Despite the remarkable progress made in recent years in the economic and social fields, following the implementation of structural economic reforms, Africa remains in many respects a region where poverty has increased spectacularly. On this continent are found the majority of countries with the lowest indices with respect to human development.

For this reason, as a Sahelian country, we feel that the reform process proposed by the Secretary-General must strengthen the role of the United Nations and its functions in development matters, making priorities of reducing poverty and strengthening the participation of more countries in an expanding world economy. The remarkable contribution made by the development institutions, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in our country must be highlighted. We encourage the Secretary-General to ensure that in the reform process there will be respect for the autonomy of these bodies in order to preserve their effectiveness.

We welcomed the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, adopted in 1991, which has been supplemented by the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa launched by the Secretary-General in March 1996. Their purpose was to help Africa in its recovery efforts. Today it is more urgent than ever that the industrialized countries grant broad support to these programmes, and establish funds for diversification to allow African countries to obtain a better return for their commodities and thus assure vital resources for their populations. This support in particular must take the form of resources to be invested in priority sectors, such as basic education, health and security of food and water supplies, sectors capable of laying down solid bases for sustainable development in Africa.

Africa certainly needs assistance. But my country remains convinced that the resources the continent needs for its development efforts can be generated by increasing trade with the developed countries. African countries are waiting for the industrialized countries to implement the measures adopted as part of the Final Act of the Uruguay Round negotiations, supplemented by specific preference provisions in the Marrakesh Agreements, to mitigate the negative effects the reforms envisaged in the negotiations could have on countries which are net importers of food products.

Similarly, the external debt of African countries is a problem requiring viable and fair solutions, going beyond the measures taken in the Paris Club framework. The new initiative taken recently by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to significantly reduce the multilateral debt of the poorest countries, should extend to all those countries, without any eligibility conditions or deadlines.

Nonetheless, the cancellation of all the debt is the most appropriate solution in order to ensure accelerated development by the least developed countries. Such actions, in my delegation's view, will make it possible to reduce poverty noticeably.

These recommendations are set out in the Agenda for Development, adopted during the last Assembly session. It is up to the international community to effectively implement this programme to bring about development and growth in our countries.

Because of its lack of resources, successive droughts and high population growth, Niger is part of the group of African countries where poverty is omnipresent. In the light of its high level of poverty, His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré, President of the Republic of Niger, and the Government decided that for society to progress we needed stable and democratic institutions guaranteeing respect for and the promotion of human

rights. It was also decided to make all our development actions part of our battle against poverty.

In liaison with its development partners, the Government of Niger has therefore agreed on a plan to combat poverty, with policies to stimulate sustainable growth, improve rural income, give better access to social services and slow population growth, in particular. We would like to take this opportunity to invite bilateral and multilateral donors to play an active part in implementing this plan to combat poverty in Niger.

Our Government is firmly committed to ensuring good management of our economy, deepening the democratization process and bringing about the participation at all levels of those who would benefit from the execution of this plan, which is based on principles of good government. That commitment undoubtedly guarantees its success.

Moreover, I am particularly pleased to inform the Assembly, and thus to reassure the my country's backers and partners that peace in Niger has become an unquestioned reality. Indeed, since the signing of the peace agreement of 24 April 1995 in Niamey between the Government of the Republic of Niger and the Organization of the Armed Resistance, the peace process has made remarkable progress. For example, action has been taken with respect to decentralization, the return of refugees, the celebration each year of a day of harmony and the implementation of an emergency programme for the rehabilitation of our agricultural region. I solemnly appeal to the international community to contribute to the completion of the peace progress already begun.

Before concluding, I would like to reaffirm the complete commitment of a Sahelian country such as Niger to protecting the environment, whose continuous degradation is a source of real concern. Niger welcomed the recent holding in New York of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, devoted to a review of the implementation of Agenda 21 and the establishment of new policies for the future.

The special session showed us that while notable progress has been made with respect to climate change, biodiversity, combating desertification and the use of renewable sources of energy, that is not the case with regard to no less important questions, such as access to drinking water, which is a real problem for humankind, the unbridled exploitation of the oceans and deforestation.

Thus, we have to recognize that, at the conclusion of its proceedings, the special session did not live up to the hopes placed in it. In particular, it failed to create new levels of international cooperation or to establish a basis for legally binding codes of conduct on improved environmental protection.

In that context, my delegation confines itself here to recalling Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration, which emphasizes the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities for the entire international community with respect to environmental matters. The complementarity between economic, social and environmental questions obliges all our countries to acknowledge the need for solidarity and joint action to reach the goals laid down in Agenda 21. We owe this solidarity to future generations.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, His Excellency Mr. Alvaro Ramos.

Mr. Ramos (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me first of all, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your election to preside over this new session of the General Assembly. We are sure that the experience you have gained in your years of activity in the Organization, together with your personal qualities and technical skills, will, under your mandate, contribute to the strengthening of this most important body of the Organization.

Allow me also to express our congratulations to the outgoing President, Ambassador Razali, for the work he performed, which certainly contributed to the strengthening both of the presidency and of the role the General Assembly is called on to play in the United Nations.

Undoubtedly, the central focus of our attention will continue to be the issue of the reform of the Organization, the essence of which is now contained in the document submitted by the Secretary-General.

Mr. Tello (Mexico), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My country fully supports and has every confidence in the appointment and endeavours of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. We have thus paid the greatest attention to the package of reforms he has submitted, and we are prepared to promote deliberations on them so that they can be concluded as soon as possible.

We understand that the document is aimed at the objective of equipping the Organization with an administrative structure that will permit more flexible management, prevent duplication of functions and secure coordination among its organs and programmes, all of which will result in an improvement in terms of both economy and management.

Within the overall issue of reform, the specific topic of the Security Council is one of the most important because of the political significance that organ has had and will continue to have within the structure of the United Nations. Uruguay endorses an enlargement of the Council because it believes that its structure should be adapted to the new realities in the world, which differ substantially from those that existed when the Organization was established, since at that time account was taken of the power structure resulting from the Second World War.

In this regard, we support an increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent Members of the Council, to a total of not more than 25, so that efficiency is not impaired. Our country particularly supports an increased presence of developing countries to ensure a better balance in the membership of this singular organ of our Organization. We believe that the newly created seats should be occupied on the basis of real equality of opportunity for all States.

However, my country believes that the reform of the Council should not be confined to the topic of its membership. Equally important is ensuring that its activities are transparent and that information provided to and communication with the States that are not members of the Council flow freely and are up to date.

The Eastern Republic of Uruguay has expressed strong support for progressively limiting the right of veto, and to that end we have submitted a proposal to the effect that on certain subjects, the right of veto could be suspended by the General Assembly by a majority to be determined. That mechanism, essentially democratic in nature, would thus help reduce the absolute power of the right of veto as currently provided for in the Charter, while at the same time it would strengthen the competence of the General Assembly.

Nonetheless, our country will be ready to analyse any other proposal that might be submitted aimed at limiting the absolute individual veto.

While the reform of the Security Council and the possible revision of the scale of assessments have recently been, and continue to be, the focus of political attention, we should also study the question of strengthening the General Assembly. A calm and dispassionate analysis of the organizational structure and respective areas of responsibility of our Organization shows that the forum where the principle of juridical equality of States reigns supreme is undoubtedly the General Assembly.

There has been and still is much discussion regarding the composition of the Security Council and the exercise of the right of veto, in the context of the new parameters of international realities. That is all well and good, but at the same time, we need to find practical ways of revitalizing and invigorating the activity of the Assembly.

The General Assembly is a unique body in international institutional machinery. In it, representativity is practically universal. States participate on an equal footing without regard for their size or power, and the ideal of international democracy attains its clearest expression, at least in formal terms. The decisions of this body have great moral and political force and accordingly, it is essential to formulate them better and make them more timely.

For these reasons, the General Assembly not only needs to function more flexibly and utilize its resources more rationally, but also, and essentially, requires greater substance. Only thus will we be able to give its resolutions greater operative force.

Consequently, we should take a new approach and open a new chapter in the reform process, not confining our reflections and aspirations to reforms of the Security Council or to reforms of a financial nature, but extending them to the organ that brings together the international community as a whole, namely, the General Assembly.

After 52 years of the Organization's existence, the maintenance of international peace and security continues to be one of its essential functions. Peacekeeping operations, to which my country is proud to have been a contributor from the outset, must be fully maintained while adapting to new kinds of conflicts.

Uruguay is prepared for this, and, accordingly, we reaffirm here once again our commitment not only to continue to make our traditional contribution but also to

diversify it in order to adapt it fundamentally to peace-building.

In this connection, we welcome the signing, with the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, of a memorandum of understanding regarding our contributions to the United Nations standby arrangements system. This will contribute to facilitating the planning of future peacekeeping missions in the shortest possible time.

The General Assembly's recent adoption of the resolution putting an end to the use of "gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities" fulfils one of my country's long-standing aspirations and does justice to the principles of equitable geographical representation and the equality of Member States, both enshrined in the Charter.

Similarly, the recent General Assembly resolution adopting uniform and standardized rates for payment of awards in cases of death or disability sustained by troops in the service of the United Nations peacekeeping operations seems to us an important step that puts an end to an unjust situation.

We fully support the Middle East peace process initiated at Madrid in October 1991 and continued at Washington, and the Government of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay continues to encourage the necessary holding of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. It is essential for both parties to respect in good faith the commitments entered into in the Madrid and Washington declarations.

Our Latin American continent does not want an arms race; it wants, on the contrary, to be free of nuclear weapons and of other sophisticated weapons of mass destruction that can create instability. We want to work in peace, allocating the largest possible amount of resources to our economic and social development.

However, this should not be an obstacle to limited purchases of arms by our armed forces solely for the purpose of replacing their obsolete equipment, thereby fully discharging their constitutional mandates.

We must work to ensure a continuation of the mutual confidence and security that prevails in the region today, without third countries weakening and taking advantage of our continent through the sale of sophisticated weapons.

Uruguay will continue to support with firm conviction all disarmament processes, and, accordingly, we recently signed in Oslo the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines, those lethal weapons that have caused not only death and serious injury to soldiers but also the loss of thousands of innocent lives.

Protection of human rights has been and will continue to be one of the priority objectives of both our domestic and international policies. Without full exercise of human rights, there can be neither peace nor security, neither economic prosperity nor social equity, and the existence of a democratic system of government will therefore also be impossible.

In addition, there can be no full exercise of human rights without a minimum economic, social and educational base, and my country will be prepared to contribute to ensuring the existence of such a base.

In this connection, we fully support the restructuring proposed by the Secretary-General while at the same time endorsing the philosophy on which it is based, embodied in his idea that the question of human rights should be part of all the substantive spheres of the Secretariat's programme of work: peace and security, economic and social affairs, development cooperation and humanitarian affairs.

The financial crisis the Organization is experiencing, which has no counterpart in its history, stems primarily from the failure to pay assessed contributions. While not intending to justify any delay in payment, Uruguay believes that the current scale of assessments requires adjustments to make it fairer, more transparent and better based on the capacity of States to pay. That should not, however, mean that developing countries would assume new and additional commitments today; that would, in our view, be unjust and unacceptable. The system of contributions should be based on objective criteria of financial responsibility. We agree that there is a need to correct and manage the budgets of the Organization in order to reduce expenditures and increase efficiency, thus striking a balance between expenditure on peace and security and expenditure on development, each of which is a cornerstone of the other, without weakening operating and information activities.

We cannot but express our public satisfaction at seeing the importance the Secretary-General attaches to development, which he regards as one of the priorities

and essential functions of the Organization. There can be no peace without development.

On the threshold of a century that is already taking shape and that, unfortunately, seems to be marked by growth without equity, uncertainty in employment and a proliferation of crises and conflicts, good management of development assistance is today more necessary than ever before. At a time when human concerns seem to be alien to us, it is essential, in Uruguay's view, to support an Organization that holds that people must be placed at the very heart of the development process if we want growth to be compatible with the human condition and development to be conducted by and for people.

In this context, we consider it very important to maintain unconditionally the principle of universality and the right of all developing countries, without exception, to benefit from international cooperation and to receive technical assistance with a view to achieving sustainable human development.

Uruguay considers international technical cooperation essential for consolidating the processes of development and integration in the various regions. It is a fundamental tool for attaining greater economic growth.

We support the development of South-South cooperation as an important tool for promoting the improved development of nations. We believe that a new concept of technical cooperation will have to respond to traditional demands, such as humanitarian affairs, as well as others associated directly with the process of integration into the international economy, such as, for example, the redefinition of the role of the State, its modernization and its decentralization.

We believe that a positive contribution to political and democratic stability and to economic growth is made by processes of regional and subregional integration. In our case, the Southern Cone Common Market — composed of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and our country — is a clear example of democratic stability and expansion of trade, within and outside the region, compatible with the rules of the World Trade Organization.

Uruguay continues to assign to international law a primordial role as a regulator of relations among States. Respect for and compliance with international law are essential for peaceful coexistence. For this reason, we support the holding of an international conference to discuss a draft convention establishing an international criminal court for autonomous and independent hearings on certain crimes, such as genocide and others which, because of their seriousness, are roundly condemned by the international community. We also support the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the elaboration of a convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings.

In times of change, which we all see as appropriate and inevitable in order to revitalize the Organization, we nevertheless identify more than ever before with the essential purposes and principles established 52 years ago. These bind the Organization together and, despite the time that has elapsed and the important changes that have since taken place in the world, continue to constitute and must continue to constitute, today as yesterday, the goal and objective of all the changes the United Nations will have to face at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

People, simple people, call for us to be effective and efficient in our activities and bold in our decisions in preventing conflicts, and to act on their behalf in rebuilding civil societies. The citizens of every nation, of every country of the world, call on us today to be firm in our commitment to the Charter and to adapt our new activities to the changing times.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, His Excellency Mr. Ali Alatas.

Mr. Alatas (Indonesia): It gives me great pleasure to offer Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine the felicitations of my delegation on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. I am confident that, under his experienced leadership, we will achieve substantive progress in our work.

I should also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for the skilful manner in which he guided our deliberations during an extraordinarily busy year. His purposeful and decisive stewardship secured the success of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

I join other members in commending our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform". His initiative deserves our praise and the recommendations in the report merit our serious consideration.

Since we met last year, world developments have continued to show a mixture of bright promise, new

challenges and pervasive uncertainty. The post-cold-war era has opened up new possibilities for the solution of persistent problems and conflicts and the pursuit of a global agenda for peace and development. In various parts of the world, protagonists have shown a desire to resolve their differences through dialogue and negotiations. Globalization has raised the hopes of mankind for equitably shared prosperity.

Yet, intra-State conflicts continue to rage in many parts of the world even as the international community faces a multitude of new and unpredictable threats and challenges. Despite significant strides in limiting armaments, the destructive power of nuclear weapons continues to pose a threat to all life on Earth. Poverty and backwardness hold dominion over vast areas of the developing world, while the developing countries are increasingly marginalized in international economic decision-making.

We cannot hope to rid the world of these systemic problems unless we can devise an effective system of global governance capable of managing the impact of globalization and interdependence, fulfilling the interlinked demands of peace, security and development, and reconciling the competing interests of a constantly widening range of actors in international affairs. For that system of global governance to be effective and universally accepted, it must have for its central mechanism and source of legitimacy a United Nations revitalized through a process of judicious reform and democratization.

My delegation has therefore welcomed the United Nations reform package that the Secretary-General presented to the General Assembly last July. We support the endeavour to transform the leadership and management structure of the Organization so that it can address the challenges of the new millennium with a greater sense of purpose, effectiveness and efficiency. We commend the proposal to promote sustained and sustainable development through, *inter alia*, the creation of a "development dividend" by shifting resources to development activities, especially those for poverty alleviation.

We attach great importance to the proposed measure to overcome the financial crisis of the Organization through the creation of a revolving credit fund pending the attainment of a permanent solution to the crisis. Just as crucial is the idea of enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations in disarmament activities by establishing a new department for disarmament and arms regulation, to be headed by an Under-Secretary-General. That new department, however, should squarely address the question of nuclear disarmament as a priority issue and not only the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We also welcome the efforts to improve the Organization's ability to deploy peacekeeping and other field operations more rapidly, enhance the United Nations capacity for post-conflict peace-building, strengthen international efforts to combat drugs, crime and terrorism, and bolster international response to global humanitarian needs. The reorganization and restructuring of the human rights secretariat is also timely and appropriate. However, the idea of extending human rights activities by integrating them into all United Nations activities and programmes entails careful study. Hence, Indonesia stands ready to participate constructively in the detailed discussions on the proposed reform package which will take place during this Assembly.

Of equally vital concern is the question of the reform and expansion of the Security Council so as to reflect the realities of today and to accommodate the basic interests of the developing countries which comprise the overwhelming majority in the Organization. On the expansion of membership of the Council, our view is well known: that new permanent members should be chosen not only on the basis of equitable geographic representation, but also on the basis of a set of criteria such as political, economic and demographic weight; their capability and their track record of contributing to the promotion of peace both regionally and globally; and their commitment to assume responsibilities inherent to permanent membership. And we should first discuss and agree on this set of criteria before we determine who represents which region or which group of Member countries. We should not put the cart before the horse.

In this regard, predetermined numerical limitations would unduly restrict and possibly distort the representative value of the expansion of the Security Council. The African Member countries have indicated that they would like to have two permanent seats representing their region. By the same token, we believe that it is legitimate that the new composition of the Security Council should have two new permanent members from among the developing countries of the Asian continent.

As emphasized by the Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held last April in New Delhi, there should be no partial or selective

expansion of the membership of the Security Council to the detriment of the developing countries, and efforts to restructure the Council should not be subject to any imposed time-frame, for although the issue is urgent it should not be decided before there is general agreement. The Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement also stressed that the use of the veto should be curtailed with a view to its eventual elimination, and that the improvement of the working methods of the Council should be given equal importance.

While we are deeply engaged in this process of reform we must not lose sight of the fundamental goals that impelled us to undertake it in the first place: to enhance the Organization's ability to foster development and to address the root causes of poverty and conflict. Reform should not become a euphemism for budget slashing or an excuse for certain Member States to renege on their financial obligations to the Organization. When reforms are in place, they could indeed ensure optimum use of resources and generate savings. But they could become meaningless if, due to insolvency, the United Nations were rendered incapable of fulfilling its mission.

Much of the insecurity in the world today stems from the fact that the international community has not been able to abolish nuclear armaments. The Non-Proliferation Treaty has been indefinitely extended, but without any guarantee that the commitment to nuclear disarmament will be honoured. We are also dismayed that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty does not effectively prohibit nuclear testing in all environments and for all time, without loopholes or exceptions.

Nevertheless, we signed the Treaty in the hope that the nuclear Powers on their own would refrain from testing through simulation. That hope has been shattered by the sub-critical tests announced recently by a nuclear-weapon State. Although these sub-critical tests do not legally violate the CTBT, they make a travesty of the spirit of the Treaty. The nuclear Powers should desist from conducting such tests, as they could lead to the resumption of the nuclear arms race and its attendant risk of global disaster.

Meanwhile, in South-East Asia, the South-East Asia Nuclear- Weapon-Free Zone Treaty came into force earlier this year. We hope that the nuclear-weapon States will also contribute to regional security by their timely accession to the relevant Protocol of the Treaty.

In the Middle East we are witnessing a continuing escalation in Israeli provocative acts. Israel's encroachments on East Jerusalem, especially in Jabal Abu Ghneim, have plunged the peace process into deeper crisis and triggered unrest and tension on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel persists in its illegal construction activities, in blockading Palestinian territory and besieging Palestinian cities and towns and in withholding funds belonging to the Palestinian Authority.

The imposition of a harsh regimen of collective punishment contravenes all international legal norms and principles and violates the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. We must therefore vigorously support all efforts to restore the momentum of the peace process and to bring about the resumption of negotiations based on the provisions of the Declaration of Principles and the principle of land for peace. And we must continue to press for progress on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks of the peace process, for without such progress a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East question is not possible.

In Cambodia, the recent regrettable turn of events, which resulted in a significant change in the governmental set-up and political situation has threatened to plunge the country back into factional strife and instability. The interests of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Cambodia are inextricably linked, and the stability of Cambodia is essential to the stability of the South-East Asian region. Therefore, while ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, it stands ready to contribute its efforts to help restore political stability in Cambodia. Accordingly, ASEAN has proposed the immediate cessation of all armed hostilities and acts of violence throughout Cambodia and called on the conflicting parties to resolve their differences amicably.

Indonesia believes that a principled solution can only be reached through dialogue, with the aim of preserving the coalition Government that reflects the power-sharing arrangements resulting from the elections of 1993, held under the auspices of the United Nations. Furthermore, free and fair elections should be held as scheduled next May, with the participation of all Cambodian parties and political forces as an important element of its success.

Indonesia welcomes the convening of the four-party talks among the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the United States and the People's Republic of China. We believe that a positive outcome to these talks will pave the way for the

establishment of a permanent peace mechanism and that the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) will facilitate endeavours towards a lasting solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the implementation of the Peace Agreement has entered a critical phase. Key provisions of the Agreement remain unimplemented. Refugees and displaced persons continue to be denied their right to return to their pre-war homes. Freedom of movement has not been restored fully, and discrimination and harassment are still prevalent. Challenges remain in the functioning of the common State institutions that are so vital to unity and reconciliation.

The unravelling of the Peace Accord would have devastating consequences for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighbours. All concerned should therefore join ranks and work together to ensure the irreversibility of the peace process and the full implementation of the Peace Accords.

It is encouraging to note from the *World Economic and Social Survey* and other authoritative sources that the global economy is basically healthy, that growth rates have risen for the third consecutive year and that such progress has been more widespread than before. However, we have no illusions that the global economy has fully recovered from a protracted period of decline during the past decade. The echoes of the recession in the 1980s are still reverberating. Millions in the developing world are still languishing in wrenching poverty. And this new growth has had little impact on rates of unemployment and under-employment. In fact, it would take another 10 years of similar growth just to recover the gross domestic product per capita levels of the early 1980s.

Globalization has indeed brought about an unprecedented surge in international trade, investments and information flows, but it has also accentuated the inequities and imbalances of international economic relations. Only the developed economies have fully benefited from it. The developing countries as a whole continue to suffer its negative impact while being marginalized from international economic decision-making processes in which they could otherwise seek redress from the inequities weighing down their development efforts.

Even developing economies that have attained some measure of dynamism are not immune to the perils of globalization and liberalization. Given the sharp fluctuations of international financial flows and currency manipulation by speculators, economies built through years of patient, sound and solid fiscal and monetary policies could be crushed overnight in the anarchy of the globalized market place. Globalization should, therefore, be managed so as to soften its impact on vulnerable economies.

Indonesia welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of An Agenda for Development, a major initiative designed to restore the theme of development to the centre of the operations of the United Nations. The Agenda provides a comprehensive framework of principles and measures designed to promote development as a vital preoccupation of the international community. It also seeks to restore the centrality of the United Nations in the pursuit of international cooperation for development.

Perhaps the greatest constraint to development today is the dearth of financial resources for development. While there is an increased emphasis on foreign direct investment, and this is welcome, the fact remains that official development assistance constitutes the principal source of development financing for the majority of the developing countries. Regrettably, official development assistance is in sharp decline, and has today reached its lowest level since target levels were adopted in 1970. Because many developing countries are unable to attract adequate volumes of foreign direct investment, the constriction of official development assistance has taken an enormous toll on their social and economic development, particularly in their efforts aimed at reducing hunger, illiteracy and child mortality. We therefore support the proposal in the reform package submitted by the Secretary-General for the creation of an Office of Development Financing that will pursue this endeavour full-time in tandem with the proposed "development dividend".

The problem of chronic external indebtedness constitutes another debilitating impediment to development. Despite various debt relief initiatives in the past, many developing countries remain crippled by their debt overhangs. My country has always advocated a once-and-for-all approach that entails a reduction of indebtedness to a level that will allow resumption of development. We therefore support the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, as it would help some of the poorest countries escape the vicious cycle of indebtedness and deprivation and once again take the road to development. In this context, Indonesia has pledged, as a concrete expression of this support, $10 million to

the World Bank's Trust Fund for the debt relief of the heavily indebted poor countries. We also urge that these initiatives be implemented expeditiously and with flexibility, and that they cover other heavily indebted countries that are also in dire need of development.

In this era of trade liberalization, and in spite of the presence of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the developing countries are finding their comparative advantage rendered meaningless by an array of non-tariff barriers, preference-erosion and the misuse of anti-dumping measures and countervailing duties. Moreover, the persistent attempts of developed countries to link international trade issues with extraneous issues, such as labour standards, amount to a new form of protectionism. Such insidious obstacles to free and open trade have to be done away with so that the global economy can benefit from an equitable, transparent and rule-based multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization as its embodiment.

Our common aspirations for global economic and social development will never be realized until all forms of discrimination are removed from society and opportunity is afforded equitably to all humanity. The Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1993-2003) should be the vehicle of our endeavours to end all forms of racism and racial discrimination. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, must be vigorously implemented at all levels. Likewise, implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action is essential for the attainment of a positive environment for enhancing the human condition.

As to the environment, it is regrettable that the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and Agenda 21 has revealed that the commitments to the Rio Conference and to the Agenda have not been substantially fulfilled. The international community, particularly the countries that have the technological and financial resources, must summon the political will to bring positive action to support Agenda 21.

Vigorous measures should also be taken in defence of our human resources and social values against the thrusts of international crime, drug trafficking and drug abuse. We therefore remain committed to support the mechanisms of the United Nations anti-crime and anti-drug programmes. We look forward to the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in 1998 to assess the situation and to develop further ways and means of combating these international social evils.

In the area of human rights, the United Nations should continue to strengthen its role as the architect of a common plan based on a holistic approach toward the promotion of, and respect for, the inherent dignity of the human being. At all levels, we must work with all interested parties, maintain constructive relationships and foster dialogue and cooperation as the most effective means of advancing human rights. In this regard, Indonesia stands ready to cooperate with the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We also support all initiatives promoting a more balanced approach to human rights. In this context, we note with interest the 19-point Universal Declaration on Human Responsibilities proposed by the InterAction Council. We agree with former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, the InterAction Council Chairman, that, if adopted by the international community, the Declaration on Human Responsibilities, together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, could serve as twin pillars providing an ethical base for a just world. Indeed, freedom without acceptance of responsibility can destroy freedom itself, whereas when rights and responsibilities are balanced, freedom is enhanced. We have always held that although the individual should not be sacrificed in the name of society, neither should society be allowed to disintegrate to accommodate the individual. Without this fine balance, neither rights nor responsibilities can meaningfully exist.

Allow me to take this opportunity to express the gratitude of my Government to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the singular honour it recently bestowed on Indonesia by formally citing His Excellency President Soeharto and the people of Indonesia for

> "outstanding accomplishments and commitments to the significant reduction and continued eradication of poverty in Indonesia and for making poverty eradication an overriding theme of national development efforts."

This is an honour that Indonesia holds in trust for all developing countries endeavouring, in spite of their constraints and adversities, to attain a better life for their peoples while still contributing to the making of a better world. With developed and developing nations working together within the framework of a revitalized United Nations, we can indeed before too long achieve the final

conquest of the most formidable and tenacious enemy of humankind, poverty.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I have the pleasure at the outset to extend to the President and his friendly country, Ukraine, my sincere congratulations on his election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. In wishing him success in conducting the proceedings of this session, I would like to assure him of my delegation's readiness to cooperate with him in making his task a success and in achieving the desired objectives of the session.

It is also my pleasure to commend the dedicated efforts of the President's predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, in presiding over the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, and to express the thanks and appreciation of the State of Bahrain to him and to his friendly country, Malaysia.

I would like to take this opportunity to express the State of Bahrain's appreciation for the tireless and sincere efforts that the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has made since his appointment and of the great attention he pays to international issues and, to the reform of the Organization and strengthening its role in the maintenance of international peace and security. By virtue of his extensive experience in the United Nations, he has gained expertise in both international politics and the management of the Organization.

I would be remiss in this connection if I did not express appreciation for the endeavours of the former Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and for his efforts and accomplishments with regard to reform of the Organization.

We do not believe there has been in the history of our modern world a period more harmonious with the spirit of the United Nations or more expressive of its orientation than the current period. Had the Organization not been established half a century ago by a farsighted initiative of the founding Member States, it would have been incumbent upon the international community to proceed to create it now, at this important juncture in history. This is because current international developments relevant to various aspects of human life require the existence of such an Organization, which, by its composition and nature, and guided by its Charter, is equipped to handle world affairs, in the spirit of one great family. Not a single international issue is now beyond the scope of the Organization.

The impression that the role of the United Nations has become marginal or marginalized in the wake of the cold war — true as it might be in certain isolated and limited situations and cases of international action — does not, in our conviction, reflect thoroughly and comprehensively the current stage of our world's history or the aspirations of all its States. Such aspirations require the existence of a world organization that is active and effective, not only in political and security affairs, but also, and increasingly so, in civilizational, developmental, economic, environmental, cultural and intellectual affairs. For increasingly, now that they have become the focus of attention of all nations, big and small, those non-political matters influence world affairs and the life and direction of peoples much more than political matters do.

We have followed with interest the work of the General Assembly's Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System and carefully studied the Secretary-General's report (A/51/950) to the General Assembly, "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", which he submitted on 14 July. We express our appreciation for the Secretary-General's invaluable efforts regarding the reform process, and the measures and recommendations contained in his report, and we would also welcome any General Assembly actions that would reflect the general attitude of Member States vis-à-vis the reform process that meets the current requirements and desires of Member States. My country is both interested in, and appreciative of, the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, in view of the great increase in the United Nations membership. It should also be pointed out that it is in the interest of the reform process that the work of the Security Council be transparent so that all other Member States which are not members of the Council are aware of the latter's proceedings with regard to the reform process.

Bahrain has presented its candidacy for Security Council membership for the period 1998-1999 in the elections that will take place during this session, based on

the provisions of the Charter that allow participation for all Member States. The history of civilization has shown us that a number of smaller countries and peoples have, not less than the larger nations, taken the lead in progress, development and creativity. The independent policy which the State of Bahrain has pursued throughout the 26 years that it has been a Member of the United Nations, has qualified its candidacy as meriting the support of the Group of Asian States for the non-permanent seat allocated to that Group.

Moreover, Bahrain has a long record of constructive participation in support of United Nations activities and in support of the rights of peoples to independence, freedom and self-determination, in opposing apartheid and in supporting decolonization. It has also been actively involved in the work of the United Nations system and organs dealing with the fields of disarmament and economic and social development. In addition, Bahrain has bolstered Security Council efforts in the field of international peace and security, particularly in the Arab Gulf region, which prompted the Secretary-General to pay tribute to that role to which he referred in paragraph 816 of his 1996 annual report on the work of the Organization. He said:

> "The Government of Bahrain's support for the Commission's [the United Nations Special Commission] Field Office has been outstanding and remains essential to the continued logistics lifeline to the activities of the Commission" *(A/51/1, para. 816)*.

Furthermore, the State of Bahrain hosts a number of United Nations regional offices, including, in addition to the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) Field Office, the offices of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environmental Programme, and the United Nations Information Centre.

The State of Bahrain welcomes the endorsement its candidature for Council membership has received from the Asian Group, the Group of Arab States and the member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, to which it belongs. Bahrain, noting the overwhelming support of the Member States, will have the pleasure to declare, when elected to the membership of the Council, that it will do its utmost, in cooperation with other Member States, to fulfil its duties towards the achievement of international peace and security and the upholding of the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

Through its experience in its region and larger area, my country has played, since the early years of the twentieth century, a significant and leading role in the development of civilization, culture and society, in modernizing management and the economy, and in consolidating the bases of an advanced civil society — a pioneering role to which any objective historian of the development of civilization in the Gulf region will attest.

The question of regional security remains of crucial importance to the State of Bahrain, in view of the dangerous ramifications and impacts it has on the security, stability and safety of peoples and nations. The situation in the Gulf region, which has witnessed in recent years two devastating wars that have upset the region's peace and stability and delayed the implementation of numerous development and construction projects, requires that all the States of the region and the world Powers with vital interests in the region promote and strengthen relations among the States of the region on the basis of good neighbourliness, mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of others and recognition of every State's national sovereignty.

The territorial and boundary claims currently witnessed in the Gulf region, aim at changing the established and traditionally accepted boundaries, disturbing the security and stability of the region. We believe that the optimum and most judicious course to avoid that prospect is to respect the status quo; to refrain from any claims, total or partial; and to settle any consequential disagreements by peaceful means acceptable to the parties to the dispute.

Insofar as the situation between Iraq and Kuwait is concerned, the State of Bahrain, being keen on the maintenance of security and stability in the Gulf region, stresses that Iraq should fully comply with the requirements of international legitimacy and uphold its commitments under relevant Security Council resolutions, including those relating to the release of prisoners and detainees of Kuwaiti and other nationalities. Bahrain is also keen on ensuring the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and opposes any interference in Iraqi internal affairs, as any such interference is considered a violation of the sovereignty of a Member State of the Organization.

The State of Bahrain also expresses its satisfaction that the oil-for-food agreement between the United Nations and Iraq is alleviating the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people.

In the same context, the continued occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the three islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, all of which belong to the United Arab Emirates, constitutes an important cause for anxiety and concern to the State of Bahrain and the other member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, in view of the occupation's serious consequences for the security and stability of the region and the effect it has on good-neighbourly relations among the States of the region.

Consequently, the State of Bahrain calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond urgently to the calls of the United Arab Emirates to resolve the question of the islands through serious bilateral negotiations or through any other available peaceful means for the settlement of disputes through reconciliation among States.

The ominous setbacks and impediments that have beset the Middle East peace process which threaten that process and pose dangers to the entire region are but the result of Israel's non-adherence to the basic premises underlying the process since the Madrid Conference in 1991 and to the agreements which emerged from the negotiations that followed between the parties concerned. Only through compliance with those commitments, which are based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), the implementation of the land-for-peace principle, and refraining from any actions that contravene those commitments, can there be a viable basis for getting the peace process back on its proper track and the achievement of progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks as well. A just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region is not conceivable without the return of the occupied territories to their owners and the recognition of the Palestinian people's right to have their own independent state on their own national soil, with Jerusalem as its capital.

For a just and comprehensive peace to be attained, it is essential that Arab rights be restored, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, which call for the complete withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Syrian Golan, southern Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories, including, most importantly, Jerusalem.

The State of Bahrain has endorsed the peace process since its inception in Madrid in 1991. It has participated in all the committees that have been established in connection with the process and has hosted a meeting of the environmental committee. This was in support of endeavours to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region, which should be the strategic option of all States of that region. A just peace which can guarantee that people's legitimate rights are restored is what will ensure security, stability and prosperity for the region's peoples.

The continued strife in Somalia has brought destruction and devastation to the Somali people. We reiterate our appeal to all warring factions to implement all agreements reached so far and to exert concerted efforts with a view to reaching a genuine and durable solution to the problem in order to preserve the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Somalia. With respect to the situation in Afghanistan, we call for an immediate end to the fighting among the sons who belong to the same homeland, for support of the efforts being made to this end, and for the achievement of national reconciliation with a view to preserving the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan without any external interference.

The State of Bahrain reiterates its support for the Dayton Agreement concerning peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It calls for full and complete implementation of that Agreement and for the creation of conditions that allow for the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons in complete safety and security. Such steps would enhance national reconciliation and help preserve peace and stability in the region as a whole.

As we reiterate our support for the unity, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus, we welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at the achievement of a just and practicable settlement in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions.

The international arena has witnessed terrorist acts whose repercussions have gone beyond the boundaries of the countries concerned. Violence has become so rampant and ferocious that it is possible to say that terrorist acts constitute crimes against the world order, the vital interests of nations, the peace and security of humanity and the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals. The spread of terrorism has caused the death of hundreds of innocent people and the destruction of public and private property, thus shaking internal stability and impeding the normal development of relations between States. Consequently, my country calls upon the international community to seek the best possible ways and means for the elimination of all serious crimes of a terrorist nature.

In this connection, the State of Bahrain expresses its support for the provisions adopted by the General Assembly in its relevant resolutions 49/60 and 51/210, and hopes that the international community will cooperate in the elaboration of a strategy for cooperation between States with a view to combating terrorism and not providing havens to terrorist organizations. Furthermore, States should allow neither their territories nor their media to be used, nor their civil liberties systems to be exploited, to the detriment of other States.

Bahrain, being a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, is of the view that the Treaty should achieve universality without any considerations or exceptions restricting it. At the same time, it would like to stress that the Treaty, as a vital pillar for the maintenance of international peace and security, should be upheld, its provisions respected and its purposes pursued till fulfilment. It considers Security Council resolution 984 (1995), albeit limited in terms of safeguards, a first positive step towards the achievement of comprehensive security safeguards for all non-nuclear-weapon States.

Because it believes that international cooperation is essential for ridding our world of all weapons of mass destruction, the State of Bahrain ratified last April the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. Convinced of the importance of peace, stability and mutual confidence in the Middle East, it has also endorsed the initiative aimed at establishing the region as a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction.

The world economy is currently experiencing a period of growth which, according to the estimates of this year's *World Economic and Social Survey*, is expected to reach 3 per cent this year. An observer of the economic conditions in developing countries, however, can perceive the extent of the difficulties faced by those countries in their endeavours to raise their economic level to the bare minimum and so enable their citizens to live with dignity. The close link between economic development and social development has become a cornerstone of the security and stability of societies, both in developing and developed countries. Yet the rising social tensions that we witness in numerous societies in developing countries, emanating from economic problems, underlines the need to address and deal with that phenomenon at the international level.

When developed countries contribute to the development of the economic systems in developing countries they do not, in so doing, merely assist those countries; they also enable the developing countries to become an effective economic partner, which can assist the developed countries in combating the scourge of unemployment, inflation and economic stagnation.

The inability to strike a balance between social and economic issues and the preservation and management of the resources needed for development, coupled with an increasing emphasis on environmental protection, has undermined development, a cornerstone of Agenda 21, which was adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It is therefore imperative that international agreements reached and commitments made during that Conference be implemented, and that measures to speed up the implementation of the Agenda be identified without any need to reopen discussions on matters already agreed upon. The issues addressed by the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly last June, in which Bahrain took part, for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, were more detailed and specific in so far as poverty eradication and environmental protection are concerned, although the desired results have not been attained.

The destructive effects on humanity of drug and psychotropic substance abuse, production and illicit traffic are among the most serious challenges we face. We therefore welcome the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in 1998 to be devoted to this question and related crimes and to the achievement of tangible results in relation to the objectives envisaged in resolution 51/64 concerning the negative and destructive implications of drug abuse, on the basis of the principle of joint responsibility in confronting the illicit drug trade. Collective measures should also be taken to solve this problem, which constitutes a common threat to the international community.

In the light of the new world realities, the United Nations should play a more effective role in providing organizational frameworks and appropriate forums to enable various Member States to contribute within their capacities and capabilities to the reshaping of our modern world, tending towards increased closeness and interaction on various planes of human activity.

The current period, characterized by cascading changes, requires a joint intellectual vision on the part of all Member States of the Organization and their peoples with respect to what should be done for the common good of mankind and to prepare for it. Such a vision should transcend visions of conflicting ideologies, which characterized the world of the cold war as well as the predictions of future clashes of civilizations.

It is also vital that the United Nations create a favourable climate and appropriate management whereby it can provide, in addition to the basic functions it undertakes, a veritable forum for world thought, into which will flow a variety of opinions, emanating from various regions, civilizations and experiences. Thus, the Organization may help crystallize an overall human vision conducive to understanding, peace and cooperation, rather than a situation in which new adversaries and enemies are sought for one side or another.

The current period also requires us to bring about cohesion and integration among the various elements in the flow of information and satellite transmissions from every corner of the Earth. The volume of this information is enormous, its sources diverse and its objectives conflicting; it has deluged societies. It is difficult to absorb all this information, and perceptions of it are often confused.

Unless a common, comprehensive and inclusive vision is found to restore cohesion and compatibility to this great mass of information, the world will be threatened with intellectual chaos that could take it back to a time when disorder and contradictions held sway in mankind's vision. No global mechanism is better suited to be the proper means and the appropriate international forum for this universal intellectual task than the United Nations. It should at this stage provide direction and guidance for all aspects of international cooperation, both within the framework of the Organization and at the regional and national levels.

While we look forward to such a comprehensive vision for our modern world, we must stress that it would be prudent not to let globalization — which is a natural and acceptable phenomenon in the context of technology, science, production, economic and information systems and the related material components of our common human civilization — be imposed, especially through coercion or pressure, on special spiritual, religious, cultural and political attributes. If it is, the world will fall into the abyss of futile ethnic, cultural and religious feuds. Development of the moral aspects of civilizations and systems can only occur gradually, through inner conviction, and in tandem with the logical internal development of each structure and system rather than through technological development that spreads rapidly from civilization to civilization. Coerced imposition of globalization on any spiritual or moral facet of a society, especially through external sources, would constitute a wrongful revival of political and cultural colonialism, whose cumbersome legacy and adverse effects the world has barely eradicated. It is our hope that if it builds on the remarkable role it played in the elimination of the old form of colonialism, the United Nations will be able to play a positive part in steering the process of globalization in the right direction and in preventing the unilateral takeover of a world of diverse spiritual cultures and civilizations.

In view of the Organization's contribution to the preservation of world peace and security and the role it continues to play in support of the causes of peace and justice and in the implementation of the principles of international legitimacy, its activities in the field of preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping operations, and its constructive role in resolving numerous questions and crises, it is incumbent upon us to make available to the United Nations all possible moral and material support and to cooperate with it and with its specialized agencies.

Hence the importance, in our view, of formulating within the framework of the United Nations a balanced intellectual vision which, in addition to bringing out elements which are common to all peoples, would be based on respect for legitimate pluralism as it relates to special spiritual, moral and political attributes. In the absence of such a balanced vision, our world is apt to continue to be threatened with imbalance, instability and a lack of security.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Alexander Arzoumanian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Arzoumanian (Armenia): I begin by congratulating Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. I am confident that the skills and vast experience he has acquired throughout his distinguished diplomatic career will provide the guidance we need to guarantee the successful outcome of the session.

I must also recall the remarkable diligence of his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, and his valuable contribution to the work of the fifty-first regular session and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly.

As the twentieth century comes to an end, it is evident that all countries in the world, advanced, developing and transitional, will be substantially affected by globalization. Further specialization, the widening of markets through trade, a broader division of labour and a more efficient and more diversified allocation of financial resources should increase overall productivity and raise living standards. However, no country will benefit from this trend spontaneously or automatically. The major tasks that Governments face today are development and the pursuit of sound policies and appropriate structural adjustments to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities of globalization.

Economic reforms, which Armenia began immediately after its declaration of independence, have changed all key sectors of the economy, particularly agriculture, enterprises, prices and wages, the banking industry and the fiscal, foreign trade and exchange systems. Concurrently, the country began the institution of secure property rights and a judiciary strong enough to protect them.

After a devastating fall in real output from 1991 through 1994, macroeconomic and structural reforms, combined with privatization, have stabilized the country's economy while bringing down inflation, and allowed Armenia to achieve significant growth in 1996. Armenia's gross domestic product, which dropped 25.3 per cent on average from 1991 to 1993, has turned around and has averaged 6.3 per cent annual growth since then. This is despite a disastrous earthquake in 1988, the conflict between Nagorny Karabakh and Azerbaijan, which caused the inflow of more than 300,000 refugees, and continuing problems in obtaining stable energy and industrial supplies because of a blockade imposed by neighbouring Azerbaijan.

The drastic changes were coincident with the adoption of a medium-term macroeconomic reform programme supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The major objectives for the 1997 period are: to maintain a real annual growth rate in gross domestic product of about 6 per cent; to continue curbing the inflation rate for the whole year and keeping it under 10 per cent; and to augment the level of gross foreign exchange reserves to the equivalent of 2.8 months of imports.

Also, the Government of Armenia will go on to take several measures during the programme period aimed at continuing to refine the targeting of social safety-net benefits to alleviate a sharp decrease in average consumption levels and improve income distribution.

For Armenia and countries with economies in transition as a whole, the move towards world market prices brought severely deteriorated terms of trade. The introduction of currency convertibility and a notable increase in external borrowing began to cause frequent unsustainable external debt positions. The resources which are urgently required to modernize the industrial structure to internationally competitive levels and to improve the general infrastructure immensely exceed domestic saving capacities. This situation underlines the necessity of addressing more thoroughly the needs of countries in transition by the international donor community, though this should not cause a decrease in official development assistance flows to the developing world.

In this context, Armenia welcomes the adoption of the Agenda for Development by the General Assembly earlier this year as one of the major documents which should be among the guidelines for actions of the United Nations system and affiliated institutions to strengthen international cooperation for development. We also support the appraisal of conditions in Africa, least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries as "Critical situations and special problems" within the Agenda for Development, and we hope that the post-cold-war international community will pay more attention to these issues of prime concern.

The interaction between the United Nations and other multilateral development institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, should be intensified, involving the field level in particular. Joint efforts could be concentrated especially on those areas where private investors need encouragement, and where without such general institutional support they would hesitate to commit long-term capital. Proper intergovernmental follow-up and implementation of the corresponding General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions are capable of facilitating this process.

Sustainable development and related environmental issues are other areas of strategic importance where the United Nations must further strengthen its credibility. We acknowledge the outcome of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 as an important step to enhance the implementation of the major international global and regional environmental agreements.

Economic and democratic reforms are complementary and heavily interdependent. Political and economic freedom means more predictable, more transparent, more constitutional, less discriminatory and less corruption-prone law-making and enforcement.

We recognize democracy and respect for human rights, universal access to knowledge and information and a high level of public awareness as preconditions for sustainable social development. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the role of human rights within the United Nations system.

Armenia considers self-determination to be an inalienable human right. In this respect, the Nagorny Karabakh conflict continues to occupy the Government of Armenia. Despite concentrated negotiations of the past several years, the maintenance of a ceasefire for more than three years, and the intensified efforts of the international community, the Nagorny Karabakh peace process continues to suffer from a lack of serious progress. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Lisbon Summit of December 1996, which was expected to reflect on the peace process, to consolidate the ceasefire and to provide impetus for a possible breakthrough this year, failed to serve its intended purpose. Instead, by attempting to predetermine the final status of Nagorny Karabakh, it unnecessarily stiffened Azerbaijan's position and minimized the possibility of a mutually acceptable compromise solution. We believe that the final status of Nagorny Karabakh should be negotiated between the parties directly involved and not dictated by outside interested parties.

Armenia appreciates the most recent efforts of the Minsk Group Co-Chairmen to reach a compromise solution, which were also manifested in the Denver statement of the Presidents of the three co-chairing countries. Armenia has provided a detailed response to the proposal of the Minsk Group Co-Chairmen, insisting on securing commonly recognized freedoms for the Nagorny Karabakh population, as well as guaranteeing their security so that their physical existence and control over their territory and destiny are never threatened.

Armenia believes that a resolution acceptable to all parties involved is key to establishing durable peace and stability in the region and to stimulating economic growth and prosperity in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh. My country remains committed to a negotiated settlement of the conflict and will continue to engage constructively in the peace process. However, we urge Azerbaijan to negotiate directly with the elected officials of Nagorny Karabakh, for we strongly believe that no final solution can be achieved without Karabakh's direct participation in the deliberations on its own political status.

The Republic of Armenia has been actively participating in the fields of arms control and disarmament. We reaffirm our commitment to full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) objectives. To that end, Armenia welcomes the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) programme on strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the safeguards system. We have already expressed our readiness to conclude a supplementary protocol to the safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

Last year the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We join the international community in calling upon all States to sign and ratify this Treaty to ensure its early entry into force.

The Chemical Weapons Convention was another historic accomplishment in the field of global disarmament. As a founding member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Armenia will advocate the full and effective implementation of the Convention.

Armenia also supports the complementary efforts — through the Ottawa process — aimed at achieving a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines. We realize the importance of developing technological solutions to mine detection and clearance, and we fully support programmes on assistance to mine victims.

The reform of the Security Council should become another important component of the overall reform within the United Nations. Armenia supports the current discussions on improving the representative character of

the Security Council. We are in favour of expansion in both categories, permanent and non-permanent. However, while strengthening the capacity of the Council, such an increase should also safeguard its decision-making efficiency. We believe that five new seats should be allocated as permanent for the Security Council to better reflect present political and economic realities. This arrangement should include improved representation for the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. We also support the desire of Germany and Japan to acquire the status of permanent members of the Security Council.

As regards the non-permanent seats, it is our view that the expansion should take into account the legitimate interests of the Eastern European Group, whose membership has more than doubled in recent years.

The Government of Armenia welcomes the proposals by the Secretary-General for the reform of the United Nations. We fully support his commendable efforts to refine the structure of this Organization and to streamline the operations of its system, to make it more flexible and capable of adequate, timely responses to the challenges of today's world. These proposals are a sound basis for immediate actions, further negotiations and deliberations by the General Assembly. There is a strong need to consolidate the ongoing attempts of the United Nations system and Member States to alter and develop the Organization. At the same time, we should avoid reducing the evaluation of these reforms to a purely financial or managerial approach. Reform must enable the United Nations to attain more effectively the mandates and priorities enshrined in the Charter.

In conclusion, let me assure the Assembly that Armenia, keenly aware of the importance of an effective and active United Nations, is committed to contributing its share in the strengthening of this Organization.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, His Excellency Mr. Abderrahim Zouari.

Mr. Zouari (Tunisia)(*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me to begin by expressing my warmest congratulations to the President upon his election. We are confident that his experience, know-how and broad understanding of international issues will be invaluable in carrying out the noble mission that has been entrusted to him and will provide the best possible assurance of the success of this session. His election to the presidency reflects the very special respect the international community has for his friendly country, Ukraine, because of its wise policy, based on moderation and a sense of proportion and also because of the efforts it is making to consolidate the principles of peace, justice and cooperation as the foundation of relations between States.

I also wish to express our warmest thanks and gratitude to last year's President, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, who throughout his term in office distinguished himself by the dedication and loyalty with which he carried out his functions, playing a remarkable role in the reform of the United Nations and its restructuring and adaptation to the changes occurring in the world, and in preparing it to enter the twenty-first century with greater efficiency.

Reform of the United Nations and its restructuring are undoubtedly in the forefront of the issues on this session's agenda, particularly since Secretary-General Kofi Annan has kept the promise he made when he took office and has submitted a report on reform of the Organization that contains numerous measures and recommendations that are important for the Organization's future. It is with pleasure that I pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for all the initiatives he has taken and the bold proposals he has made since taking office a short while ago with a view to reforming the Secretariat and rationalizing its functioning.

Tunisia, which took an active part in the discussions held in the various working groups entrusted with the reform process, wishes to underscore the prime importance of the issues raised in the Secretary-General's report, both those that fall within his competence regarding coordination between the different Departments of the Secretariat and between the United Nations and its specialized agencies and those reforms that concern the United Nations activities and fall within the competence of the General Assembly, in connection with which the Assembly will adopt relevant resolutions.

There is no doubt that the international community is motivated by a sincere will to give a powerful impetus to the reform process to enable the United Nations to accomplish the tasks provided for in the Charter, whether with regard to achieving security and peace in the world or to establishing conditions for sustainable development, two closely related, complementary goals.

In our view, the most important priority of the reform process is to focus on strengthening the United Nations role in achieving development and in reducing and eradicating poverty, mobilizing the means required so that developing countries can achieve economic and social development and meet the crucial challenges imposed upon them by globalization and by the market economy.

Notwithstanding the well-being and prosperity that technological progress and globalization of the economy have brought to certain countries, while others have been excluded, the world's economy continues to suffer from imbalances that hinder growth in developing countries and endanger international stability. We consider it essential to give priority to these situations in United Nations programmes and activities in order to narrow the chasm that exists between States, give new impetus to international cooperation in the field of economic and social development and strengthen the United Nations capacity for effective and efficient action in this regard.

Tunisia stresses the need to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of development in order to consolidate the General Assembly's prerogatives with regard to preparing cooperation policies and monitoring their execution. The United Nations continues to be the ideal forum for this within the framework of the international community. That also requires that Member States honour their financial commitments to the United Nations in order to provide the necessary means required for successful reform, the realization of the United Nations various programmes and rational, judicious use of resources.

In this connection Tunisia once again reaffirms its support for the restructuring of the Security Council to ensure a fairer representation of Member States and to guarantee the interests of developing countries within the framework of equality for all Member States, consecrating the spirit of the Charter and giving concrete expression to its principles. In this regard, my country would recall the legitimate claim of the African States, as expressed at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit Meeting held at Tunis in June 1994 and reaffirmed at the recent OAU Summit at Harare, calling for the allocation of two permanent seats on the Security Council to be occupied by African States on a rotating basis.

It is also important to continue to improve the working methods of the Security Council and to implement fully the procedures stipulated in the Council's rules of procedure to ensure the effective participation of United Nations Member States and their collective responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

The maintenance of international peace and security and the elimination of the hotbeds of tensions, conflicts and wars that still rage in many regions of the world are today, in addition to the problems of development, at the forefront of the international community's concerns, and they continue to require determined and consistent action by the United Nations.

In this context, Tunisia emphasizes the importance of the role the United Nations must play with regard to the situation in the Middle East in the light of the dangerous developments that are taking place there. The United Nations has followed the Palestinian problem since the very beginning and has had a special responsibility to the Palestinian people from the adoption of the resolution on the partition of Palestine until the formulation of the basic principles of a pacific settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Tunisia has stood by the Palestinian people in their struggle to recover their legitimate rights and for 12 years was home to the Palestine Liberation Organization. It has followed, from a position of neutrality, the Middle East peace process and played, at the behest of its of President, a historic role in triggering that process. It has supported the process at every stage, beginning with the initial contacts between the conflicting parties, at the Madrid Conference, and in the Oslo, Washington and Cairo agreements. Tunisia was also a party to the multilateral negotiatiops. As such, Tunisia wishes here to express its profound concern and indignation at the obstruction of this process and at the freezing of the agreements that led up to it, as well as at the renewed dangers of conflict, violence and instability in the region.

We denounce the Israeli Government's policy of *fait accompli*, its failure to respect the international agreements that have been signed and the unilateral measures it has taken in building colonies inside and outside Al Quds, destroying houses, confiscating identity cards, inflicting collective reprisals against the Palestinian people, seizing their financial assets, continuing to besiege them and taking all sorts of other arbitrary measures. We call emphatically for a return to the basic references that have been part of the peace process since its inception, particularly the principle of land for peace, and for respect of international legality on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the relevant General Assembly

resolutions. Furthermore, we call for the implementation of all the provisions of the agreement pertaining to the transition stage, including the second redeployment, the opening of a secure road between the West Bank and Gaza, the opening of the airport and the port, the release of prisoners and the beginning of the final status negotiations, in accordance with the agreed-upon schedule.

The international community, particularly in the meetings of the Security Council and the three consecutive meetings of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, has already condemned the current Israeli Government's policy of building settlements in Al Quds and in the occupied Palestinian territories. This policy has greatly discouraged the Palestinian community and international opinion in general, particularly since it has given rise to acts of violence for which Israel bears sole responsibility, given the profound despair that has replaced the relief that had been felt throughout the entire region.

Tunisia exhorts the international community, and especially the two sponsors of peace, to act expeditiously and firmly to save the peace and avert the dangers that threaten the region so that the Palestinian people is able to recover its legitimate rights to the creation of an independent State on its own soil with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and to ensure the restoration to Syria and Lebanon of the territories which Israel has occupied.

We note with satisfaction the United States' resumption of efforts to save the peace process, notably the meeting held yesterday in New York between the parties concerned. We also welcome the efforts being made to restore confidence among the parties concerned with a view to helping them overcome the current crisis and achieve an equitable settlement of the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole. We feel that actions undertaken to date to mitigate the risks of tension and conflict in the region remain far below what we had hoped.

Tunisia regrets the deterioration of the current financial situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which hinders its mission to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. While reaffirming the international community's responsibility for the question of Palestinian refugees, we urge it to continue to provide assistance to UNRWA in order to allow it to carry out its mandate fully and resume its work. We urge all donors countries to maintain and honour their financial commitment and to increase their contribution to the Agency budget, taking into account the natural growth in the number of Palestinian refugees, in order to allow the Agency to overcome its severe financial crisis.

Tunisia's awareness of the importance in today's world of economic and geographic groupings to meeting the challenges of globalization and the changes we are currently witnessing encourages us to be firm and consistent in pursuing our efforts to complete the construction of the Arab Maghreb Union. The Union represents a particular claim made by the peoples of our region and one of the goals that we, together with the leaders of our brother Maghreb countries, are striving to attain.

This strategic option for the future of the peoples of the region and their cooperation with their immediate environment is strengthened by the efforts our country is making, under the impetus of President Ben Ali, to construct a Euro-Mediterranean area that will serve as a framework for cooperation among the Mediterranean riparian countries, for solidarity among their peoples and for cultural and social dialogue in the context of the noble values and principles in which we all believe. Our country has already assumed a distinctive role in ensuring the success of the various meetings and conferences held to this end, from the preparatory meeting of the region's Ministers for Foreign Affairs held in Tabarka, Tunisia, to the Barcelona conference and the meetings that followed. Our country gave concrete expression to this option in 1995 by signing an association agreement with the European Union.

We believe that it has become imperative to respond favourably to the willingness of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to settle the Lockerbie question in a fair and honourable manner in the framework of proposals made by the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Non-Aligned Movement. These proposals can help to achieve a peaceful solution based on international legality and thereby hasten the end of the suffering being endured by the brother Libyan people under the embargo. They would also strengthen stability in that part of the Mediterranean.

We also take this opportunity to call for an end to the suffering that has been inflicted upon the Iraqi people for a number of years now. We hope that relations among the States of the Gulf region will be based on respect for the sovereignty of all the States of the region, their territorial integrity and the inviolability of their borders, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of

the Security Council. In this context, Tunisia once again reaffirms its solidarity with the United Arab Emirates in the peaceful efforts they are making to recover the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa.

The success of the United Nations in achieving international peace and security does not rest only on peacekeeping operations, preventive diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of conflict. It also requires progress and accomplishments in the field of disarmament. Despite the end of the cold war and the achievement of a number of positive results, particularly in limiting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, these weapons — particularly nuclear weapons — continue seriously to threaten all mankind.

Tunisia, which has ratified all the international conventions on the subject, reiterates its appeals for the establishment of a denuclearized zone, free of all weapons of mass destruction, in the Middle East. This appeal has been supported by the accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of all the countries of the region with the exception of Israel, which has neither ratified the Treaty nor placed its nuclear facilities under the system of international controls, thereby endangering the security and integrity of the entire region.

There are many regions of the world that continue to be torn by war and conflict and whose populations are confronted with tragic situations as a result of instability, insecurity, famine and destitution. We nonetheless note with satisfaction that, despite the persistence of hotbeds of tension and instability in some of these regions, the African continent is beginning truly to awaken to the possibility of restored security and renewed economic growth in a number of its regions and countries.

Tunisia welcomes the development of the situation in Africa and the sincere determination of member countries of the Organization of African Unity to pursue the reforms that have been undertaken to restructure economies and consolidate democracy. At the same time, my country reiterates the appeal made by President Ben Ali many times to the international community for increased attention to be paid to the continent's problems in order to eradicate once and for all the hotbeds of tension that remain in Africa, so that security and stability may be instituted throughout the continent, enabling all its peoples to devote themselves to work and to economic development.

In this context, the role to be played by the United Nations in assisting the countries concerned to overcome these difficulties and challenges assumes primary importance. It is a role that should be seen in the context of the prime responsibility that our international Organization assumes in preserving peace and security and in confirming the fact that the United Nations is irreplaceable in these endeavours. However, this in no way minimizes the importance that should be given to the action of regional organizations, whose role has grown in recent years, making their influence visible and palpable.

Our country emphasizes the importance of the role devoted to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, which was set up by the Organization of African Unity for all issues related to security and stability on the African continent. This clearly does not prevent us from supporting any international initiative that is consistent with this essential principle and that reinforces African efforts to preserve peace and security on our continent.

We applaud the efforts of the United Nations Secretariat to stimulate cooperation and to promote consultation with the Organization of African Unity to strengthen its capacity for preventing conflicts and maintaining peace. Numerous African States, including Tunisia, have declared their willingness to participate in the standby arrangements for peacekeeping, thereby demonstrating their determination to contribute to United Nations efforts to improve the methods of organizing United Nations peacekeeping operations. There is no doubt that the promotion of international cooperation, particularly in the field of training and logistics, can ensure the success of the standby forces, thereby making it the basic formula for the establishment of United Nations peacekeeping forces. In this regard, we reaffirm Tunisia's unswerving desire to make a real contribution to the efforts of the United Nations to preserve international peace and security.

Our country has contributed both military and civilian contingents to many United Nations peacekeeping operations — from the Congo in the early 1960s to other similar operations in a number of African countries; in Cambodia; in Bosnia and Herzegovina; in Croatia; and recently in Haiti — thus giving concrete evidence of its faith in international action and cooperation carried out by the Organization. Tunisia will continue to support and assist United Nations peacekeeping operations whenever necessary.

In order to meet the challenges generated by globalization and openness in the world economy, Tunisia

has introduced substantial and coherent reforms in the political, economic and social fields to ensure society's equilibrium and integrity and the solidarity of its members, thereby eliminating the negative factors that could hinder this: exclusion, neglect of the human aspect in development, and the creation of chasms between social categories resulting from disparate levels of development within a given society.

We are convinced that global development can be achieved only when the vulnerable sectors of society have been assured the conditions for integration with economic dynamics. This requires uprooting the causes of poverty, destitution and marginalization, which is consistent with the commitment to promote solidarity and mutual assistance between the members of society on the national level, and efforts being made in that direction on the international level.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations afforded the leaders of Member countries an opportunity to confirm their determination to revitalize the role of the United Nations and to confer upon its actions greater dynamism at a time when problems of security, development and environment multiply, requiring joint efforts and shared determination to face them with a view to achieving progress, prosperity and well-being for all.

The success of the United Nations remains contingent upon action in accordance with the goals and principles enshrined in its Charter. It is also conditioned by the commitment of all countries, large and small, to implement decisions which uphold the values of liberty, dignity and justice. In so doing we will respond to the aspirations of our peoples who are the essential guarantors of the United Nations vitality and of its capacity for renewal, durability and ability to meet the challenges which humanity will confront during the next century.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, His Excellency Mr. Boris Shikhmuradov, on whom I now call.

Mr. Shikhmuradov (Turkmenistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me to congratulate Mr. Udovenko, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly. His election signifies recognition of Ukraine's great prestige in the world, respect for and confidence in the country's foreign policy, and the personal and professional qualities of the new President.

We are sincerely grateful to Ambassador Razali Ismail for his remarkable diplomatic talent and efficient performance of the President's functions during the previous session of the General Assembly.

First of all, allow me to express our satisfaction with the report presented by the Secretary-General. It is an innovative and specific document devoid of many of the weaknesses typical of similar documents in the past. Turkmenistan supports the Secretary-General's programme to reform the entire United Nations system and the functioning of its bodies — in particular the Secretariat — and to tailor the financial resources of the Organization to its planned activities.

We share the conclusion in the report that the reform of the United Nations should be radical and not gradual. However, we believe that the reforms should not be carried out as a revolutionary overhaul, especially when it comes, for example, to the Security Council, which after it becomes more representative should still remain an effectively functioning body that should not supplant the General Assembly.

In our view, a rational increase in the number of permanent members of the Security Council primarily calls for the inclusion of such States as Japan and Germany — vested with all corresponding rights and powers — because they can make a constructive input and have greater political objectiveness with respect to the work of the Security Council.

There is an issue of special interest and concern for Turkmenistan, as well as for all the countries of the region: the question of Afghanistan. We are glad to note that this question finds an increasingly prominent place in the agenda of the United Nations and in the activities of its agencies, ad hoc bodies and the Security Council. We feel special gratitude for the Secretary-General for his continuing efforts to give a new impetus to the intra-Afghan settlement. In this context, we attach particular significance to the efforts of the Secretary-General's special envoys Mr. Norbert Hall and Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. Turkmenistan was involved in the implementation of peacemaking programmes in the region by hosting a series of inter-Tajik talks and by organizing, together with the United Nations, a major international conference on humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. Turkmenistan resolutely supports and will support to the utmost the earliest possible convening of an international conference on Afghanistan with the participation of all its immediate neighbours and, in the future, the holding of

conference with the participation of the Powers vested with special international authority and capable of making a practical contribution towards the settlement. The President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, maintains constant contact regarding this matter with Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, and with the leaders of the neighbouring States of Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Turkmenistan pins great hopes on the forthcoming summit meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), to be held in Tehran in December this year, which will give the Muslim world an opportunity to determine at the highest level the guidelines for the resolution of the prolonged Afghan crisis, which has today become a bleeding wound for the Afghan people and an obstacle preventing the region from implementing major economic programmes. Turkmenistan has always believed, and still believes, that conflict situations emerging in the OIC's geographical area should be resolved through its joint efforts with the United Nations.

We are happy to be witnessing today a greater display of restraint with regard to simplistic attempts aimed at associating extremism and other negative phenomena with the world of Islam. The Muslim world like any other — for example, Christianity — is multifaceted and diverse. It confronts a whole complex of universal problems of development, and it is being mobilized to overcome conflicts and combat manifestations of uncivil social behaviour. The need for this was emphasized by the Secretary- General in his report to the current session of the General Assembly. While it is a secular and democratic State in Asia, Turkmenistan also considers itself a traditional oriental society that, by virtue of its geopolitical destiny, finds itself at the juncture of two regions, involving it simultaneously in Asian and European international affairs. Against the backdrop of the global energy potential of our State, this factor forms the basis of the United Nations-supported strategy of Turkmenistan's neutrality, which today acquires practical significance for the Organization.

All our political efforts today are aimed at creating a favourable atmosphere for economic development, both of the entire region and of every country in particular. At its summit meeting held last May in Ashgabat, the regional Economic Cooperation Organization, which today comprises 10 nations, formulated a strategic programme for the development of transport, energy, pipeline and telecommunication infrastructures. Its implementation not only corresponds to the interests of the participating States but also creates opportunities for the delivery of energy carriers, oil, gas and oil products to international markets in Europe and Asia from the enormously rich deposits in the Caspian Sea basin and the entire Central Asian area. Turkmenistan believes that, in the intensification of international cooperation, the resolution of crises in Central Asia and the use of preventive measures aimed at precluding their recurrence because of conflicting claims of States to ownership rights over natural resources, it is necessary to take into account the global challenges of the twenty-first century, which call for the early development of additional and alternative means for the rational distribution of energy-producing raw materials on world markets. Turkmenistan possesses the world's third largest gas deposits, and it has huge oil reserves and other mineral resources. It is ready to take part in open and broad-based international cooperation in this endeavour. This approach has been confirmed by the recently issued international tender for the development and exploration of oil and gas deposits in the Turkmen zone of the Caspian Sea. We cannot but express our satisfaction at the lifting of artificial barriers to the gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Iran to Turkey and Europe. We consider this a good sign from the United States, a sign that it is ready to support our efforts to strengthen our sovereignty and independent national economy.

In this context, allow me also to express our satisfaction at the fact that the Secretary-General's report and other recent documents of the Organization have at last more clearly defined the notion of Central Asia, which includes many more States as compared with the old central Asian part of the former Soviet Union. During the past several years Turkmenistan has maintained a consistent and principled approach to this issue, emphasizing that the disappearance of the southern borders of the former Soviet State gave rise to the formation of a new region unified by the common purpose of accelerating economic development and strengthening its political and State structures. Today it is inconceivable that Turkmenistan should exist without equally close ties within this region — with Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and other neighbours. We are firmly convinced that the former Soviet "Central Asian 5" have quite logically been transformed into the "Central Asian 10" and that the United Nations and its different agencies should bear in mind this objective reality when formulating their approaches to the region.

I believe it is highly important to draw the Assembly's attention to Turkmenistan's sincere commitment to the efforts of the international community to bring about the complete banning of the production

and proliferation of all types of weapons of mass destruction. Turkmenistan fully subscribes to the Ottawa process for the elimination of anti-personnel landmines. In 1996 and 1997, together with Canada, Turkmenistan actively participated in international forums in Vienna, Bonn, Oslo, Brussels and Ashgabat, which have been major milestones on the road towards the signing of the treaty banning anti-personnel landmines, which is to be signed in December this year in Ottawa. Coming from a region that has suffered the horrors of this so-called indiscriminate type of weapon, Turkmenistan is convinced that it is a timely and highly relevant treaty.

At the end of the twentieth century international relations are characterized by one specific feature: the right of choice that is enjoyed today by an unprecedentedly large number of independent nations and States. This right is becoming an increasingly stable trend strengthened by greater tolerance and patience in international relations. Participation or non-participation in one or another political or economic grouping is no longer considered, nor can it be considered, through the prism of the formula "If you are not with us, you are against us". Turkmenistan does not object to the idea of the existence of the great Powers' regional interests. This is the right of every State. However, we, like our partners in the Non-Aligned Movement, unequivocally object to the existence of zones of unilateral domination. We stand for the principle of open land as well as that of open skies. While building its relations with all States on the basis of the principles of equality and mutual respect, neutral Turkmenistan does not divide its partners into categories of close or remote, big or small, because that runs counter to the political logic of our times.

Today, during my meeting with Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary- General of the United Nations, I delivered to him a personal message from the President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov which, in particular, states, first, that our political philosophy and all our actions are free of any self-serving interests and are primarily aimed at strengthening peace and raising the economic well-being and cultural and educational level of its peoples; secondly, that the United Nations can be fully convinced that Turkmenistan is prepared to give the Organization its maximum possible assistance; and, finally, that the United Nations can count on Turkmenistan in all its initiatives and endeavours in the region.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Her Excellency Mrs. Nadezhda Mihailova.

Mrs. Mihailova (Bulgaria): I would like, first of all, on behalf of the Bulgarian delegation to congratulate Mr. Udovenko on his election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. His vast experience and knowledge will be of great importance for the successful fulfilment of the tasks facing the Organization today. I would also like to express our appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for his competence in presiding over the fifty-first session.

The statements of previous speakers have proved the importance of the necessity for an efficient overall reform of the United Nations. I would like to declare Bulgaria's support for the position of the European Union, as stated in this general debate by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, Mr. Jacques Poos.

The word "reform" has been used so much today in different parts of the world that I would be afraid of classifying United Nations reform with the various other reforms advocated by numerous politicians. If I take the liberty of sharing the Bulgarian experience, it is because in early 1997 my country lived through its genuine reformist resurrection. Hundreds of thousands of citizens walked in the streets of Sofia and other Bulgarian cities and towns to demand opportunities, not well-being. Their voice precipitated early parliamentary elections and brought a disastrous rule to an end.

Obviously, three things are needed for the success of reform: vision, strategy and courage. The vision about where we want to go, the strategy for getting there and the courage to begin.

I hope that the fifty-second session of the General Assembly will be remembered for decisive progress in designing and carrying out the reform of the United Nations. We have already heard the profound analysis and the valuable proposals put forward in the report of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. It is now the turn of the representatives of Member States to commit their vision, sense of strategy and courage.

Let me briefly present our views on the main aspects of the reform of the United Nations. The Bulgarian Government has thoroughly studied the proposals and the report of the Secretary-General. In principle, we support and approve of these proposals.

The Republic of Bulgaria considers the ongoing discussion within the United Nations on the reform and

enlargement of the Security Council to be positive and substantive. In our view, the decisions on these important matters should be reached by consensus. We believe that the enlargement should reflect the increased number of United Nations Member States. On the other hand, the growing economic and political potential of some Member States may attest to their ability and maturity to successfully assume the responsibilities and meet the challenges of permanent members of the Security Council.

A fair decision on the enlargement of the Council should preserve the balance between the permanent and non-permanent members, as well as among the regional groups. Such a decision should also include the allocation of an additional non-permanent seat for the Group of Eastern European States.

We support the efforts aimed at further improving the early warning system of the Organization. The new challenges to international peace and security demand an enhanced role for United Nations peacekeeping operations. As an active participant in United Nations peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Tajikistan and elsewhere, Bulgaria welcomes the growing efficiency of the Security Council and also supports an enhanced role for the Secretary-General in the field of preventive diplomacy.

Bulgaria shares the view that future peacekeeping operations should encompass the whole complex of political, humanitarian and military aspects of peacekeeping in order to achieve maximum efficiency. Close cooperation with the regional security organizations and other relevant bodies is of key importance to the success of future United Nations peacekeeping efforts as well.

For years now the United Nations has been operating under the burden of a serious financial crisis. Bulgaria supports the initiatives contained in the report of the Secretary-General aimed at elaborating criteria and mechanisms for stringent financial discipline, strict control and accountability. Such an approach could contribute to the successful implementation of the administrative reform and reorganization of the Secretariat.

We believe that a new scale of assessments for contributions to the United Nations regular and peacekeeping budgets would allow greater account to be taken of the financial potential of individual Member States. Bulgaria shares the ideas expressed by the Secretary-General that the reform should be implemented within the framework of a complex approach that would not neglect the specific needs of the countries in transition and the smaller States.

We support the efforts aimed at restructuring the governing institutions of the United Nations in the socio-economic field; at raising the operational capacity of the Economic and Social Council and of the specialized funds and programmes; and at transferring funds from management and administration to social and economic programmes.

As Assembly members are probably aware, 1997 was a difficult but successful year for Bulgaria. The beginning of the year was marked by an acute economic, financial and political crisis, which resulted in the appointment of a caretaker government, the dissolution of the Bulgarian Parliament and early elections. At the same time, the civilized, peaceful and constitutional way in which Bulgarian society overcame the political crisis is a very important sign of the maturity of democracy in the country.

At the elections held last April the Union of Democratic Forces won an overwhelming majority for their agenda: financial stabilization, market-oriented structural economic reform and speedy privatization; the strengthening and modernizing of State administration; rule of law and combating organized crime and corruption; and the integration of Bulgaria into the Euro-Atlantic community of nations.

We have made every effort to implement this strategy, and today we already have the first positive results. In the political sphere, the transition to the rule of law, political pluralism and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms has been completed. The democratic institutions are stable and enjoy the broad support of more than 50 per cent of the people. In the economic sphere, a currency board was successfully introduced as a means of guaranteeing financial stabilization and of restoring the confidence of the international financial institutions and business circles in Bulgaria. This has resulted in a radical decrease of the inflation rate and an increase in foreign investment and the country's currency reserves. The results of the crackdown on crime and corruption have re-established respect for law and order.

Here I would like to point out that Bulgaria attaches great importance to the concerted efforts of the world community in the fight against organized crime and terrorism. We look forward to contributing to the efforts

to elaborate the future international convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings and for the drafting of a widely accepted text of the statute of the international criminal court.

We are also committed to draft regional programmes for preventing organized crime, international terrorism, illicit drugs and arms trafficking, illicit trade in nuclear materials and the trafficking of people.

The desire of the Bulgarian Government to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union underlies our foreign policy and is overwhelmingly supported by the Bulgarian nation. For us, accession to these institutions is an expression of the European identity of Bulgaria and an integral element of the political and economic transformation of the country. It is a question of immediate national interest and strategic priority, a matter of choice of civilization; and not an issue of politics of the day.

Bulgaria considers the decisions reached at the NATO Summit in Madrid as a historic opening of the alliance to the new European democracies. We feel strongly that the enlargement should continue as a geographically balanced process aimed at achieving equal security and stability in different regions; thus the risks of new dividing lines or grey zones in Europe would be avoided.

Our Government is making great efforts to intensify its preparations for accession to the European Union, with a view to meeting the requirements for membership in the nearest possible future. We strongly hope for a political decision by the European Union to start the negotiations with all associated countries at the beginning of 1998. This would be a confirmation of the position that all candidate countries have equal chances of becoming members.

Bulgaria considers these integration processes as a significant contribution to the strengthening of regional stability and security in south-eastern Europe. The Bulgarian Government is making every effort to promote European standards of international conduct in this part of the continent. Our approach has been backed by a number of important initiatives at the regional level. The cooperation between NATO members and partner countries in the area is an important element in this process, and Bulgaria has advanced ideas for an enhanced Euro-Atlantic cooperation on the security of south-eastern Europe and the Black Sea.

Bulgaria will also continue to work actively along the lines of its 1996 initiative for security, stability and cooperation in south-eastern Europe. We attach great importance to the coordination of our efforts with the other initiatives for cooperation in the region, especially with the Royaumont process launched by the European Union and the South-east European Cooperative Initiative, sponsored by the United States.

Our aspiration to non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the 2002-2003 period demonstrates our readiness to assume responsibilities for peace and security both in the region and in a wider international context.

As members know, Bulgaria has suffered tremendous losses as a result of the strict implementation of the sanctions imposed by the Security Council against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Combined with the disadvantages caused by the sanctions against Libya and Iraq, the total amount of the direct and indirect costs to Bulgaria is comparable to the country's foreign debt. Therefore, the Republic of Bulgaria will continue to attach particular importance to the work being done within the United Nations system to address more effectively problems related to the implementation of Article 50 of the Charter.

We welcome the provisions of the General Assembly resolutions urging the organizations within the United Nations system, international financial institutions and other international bodies to continue to address more specifically and directly the issue of economic assistance to third States affected by the implementation of the sanctions. I should like to draw the Assembly's attention to the possibility of granting certain exemptions from sanctions or creating a preferential regime for the most gravely affected third States. Naturally, these exemptions and preferences should be in accordance with the Charter. We believe that the burden of the specific economic problems created by the sanctions should be fairly distributed among all third countries and not borne by neighbouring States only.

We strongly believe that while negotiating with sanction-affected third countries, the international financial institutions should take account of the need to compensate them indirectly.

It is our understanding that the United Nations specialized agencies play an important role and provide valuable support to countries in their efforts to achieve

sustainable development. The reforms which are under way in these agencies need the support of the Member States. The reform processes in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and other organizations give us hope of success.

Bulgaria believes that the activities of international forums and bodies for human rights should be aimed at ensuring the effective exercise of these rights by every human being. The implementation of international standards could be achieved by improving existing mechanisms and by a constructive and open dialogue on the most sensitive issues. This approach is not directed a priori against any country or group of countries. In this context, Bulgaria attaches high importance to the guarantees for the human rights of Bulgarians living abroad and is closely watching the situation of Bulgarian minorities. We consider respect for the rights of Bulgarians in neighbouring States and the related implementation of international human rights standards as an important factor in the promotion of bilateral relations.

The monitoring and the effective control of the implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms remains of critical importance, and Bulgaria reiterates its support for the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. I should like at this point to welcome the appointment of Ms. Mary Robinson to this high post and to wish her every success in her activities.

The Bulgarian Government regards the possible spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery as one of the major concerns of the 1990s. The existing regimes of multilateral treaties, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, provide for basic restrictive norms in this field. The Republic of Bulgaria supports all international endeavours to meet the goals of non-proliferation and stands for a further strengthening of these regimes.

The Conference on Disarmament is an appropriate forum for negotiations on the elimination of certain types of conventional weapons. A long-lasting solution should be found to the problem of anti-personnel landmines, the ban on which has humanitarian and disarmament aspects and needs a verification regime. We believe that the text of a new Convention that would ultimately ban all anti-personnel landmines, which was agreed at the Oslo Diplomatic Conference this month, could well serve as a basis for achieving a comprehensive and widely accepted international agreement. We also hope that the Ottawa process and the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament will be mutually supportive and will result in an effective ban on anti-personnel landmines.

In conclusion, finding an adequate solution to these problems will be impossible without the successful reform and restructuring of the United Nations Organization and of all its bodies. Therefore, we expect a decisive breakthrough in this direction at the present session of the General Assembly. I am personally convinced that by the end of this session the United Nations will have changed, and that this change will be for the better.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): In his statement to the General Assembly this morning, the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya referred to the bombing of Pan American flight 103, a terrorist incident in which, together with that perpetrated against UTA flight 772, 441 people from 27 separate Member States of the United Nations were murdered — 441 people from 27 separate Member States. I should like to take this opportunity to restate the British Government's position.

As the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, made clear during the Security Council debate on 25 September, this question is not a dispute between the Libyan Government and a number of other countries. It is about the need for the international community to respond to acts of international terrorism and about the consistent failure of the Libyan Government to comply fully with Security Council resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 883 (1993). Compliance with Security Council resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter is an obligation for all Member States of the United Nations. The United Kingdom seeks no more and

no less than that Libya should demonstrate its respect for the United Nations and the international community by complying fully with the relevant resolutions.

These resolutions make it clear that Libya must hand over the Lockerbie accused for trial in Scotland or the United States. These provisions are for Libya to comply with, not to negotiate over. We reject utterly the imputation that a trial in Scotland would be unfair. There are comprehensive safeguards in the Scottish judicial system to ensure fairness. These were set out in a British letter to the Secretary-General in September 1993, and were then accepted by Libya itself. In order to provide further reassurance, however, let me repeat the offer made by the British Foreign Secretary last week. The United Kingdom would be prepared to make special provision for international observers from the Arab League, the Organization of African Unity or any other such body to attend a trial in Scotland to monitor its impartiality. Additional facilities would also be provided, including daily access to the accused if the latter so wished.

This offer demonstrates our genuine wish to see an end to this impasse and to be flexible within the parameters set out by the Security Council to achieve this end. It remains for the Libyan Government to meet its responsibilities and to abide by the Council's decisions in full.

Mr. Burleigh (United States): On behalf of the United States, I would like to exercise my right of reply to the Libyan representative's intervention to the General Assembly earlier today.

The Libyan representative made numerous references to my country, many of which were gratuitous in nature. Nonetheless, I would like only to address one of the issues raised: the lack of Libyan compliance with the world communities desire to seek justice for the victims of the Pan Am and UTA bombings. In this regard, allow me to quote a point made by the Secretary of State during the Security Council ministerial meeting last Thursday. She said that we

> "must reject the culture of impunity that has protected those guilty of gross violations of human rights or the export of terror to other nations. In this regard, ... there can be no compromise with Libya when it comes to terrorism." (*S/PV.3819, p. 29*)

The statement made today by the head of the Libyan delegation is yet another example of Libya's constant attempts to turn its international obligations into an issue between States. This is not an issue between States. This issue is about Libya's obligations to the international community. There can be no negotiation between Libya and the Security Council regarding fulfilment of Chapter VII obligations. Libya's refusal to meet its obligations amply demonstrates its disdain for the United Nations, and the Libyan Government, not the Security Council, bears responsibility for the plight of the Libyan people. The Government of Libya knows what needs to be done to bring an end to sanctions: full compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. To do less is to insult the memory of those who died so tragically and to deny the victims' families the demands of justice.

Mr. Muntasser (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I requested the floor to respond to the statements just made by the representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States with regard to the facts, the unquestionable facts, that were contained in the statement made before this Assembly this morning by the head of our delegation with regard to the question of Lockerbie.

I would first like to state that the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom were not able to refute any of the facts contained in our statement. They have not been able to answer the questions raised in it, which in itself is testimony to the arrogance of both and the invalidity of their positions.

Secondly, the two representatives denied that the dispute was between Libya on one side and the United States and the United Kingdom on the other. They also alleged that it was a dispute between Libya and the Security Council. To prove the invalidity of that allegation, I would only recall the intense deliberations of the Security Council on 10 June during the review of the sanctions imposed on Libya. That review lasted for more than two hours and the dispute was between these two countries and the rest of the membership of the Council. Libya is not a member of the Security Council and was not called to attend. Neither Libya nor any other countries were invited. All the members of the Council were on one side and the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom were on the other side. The members of the Security Council with whom we have been in contact have always told us that the difference is not with the Security Council; rather, it is with the United States and the United Kingdom. In this context, and to prove the validity of what I say and the falsity of their allegations, I would like to recall what

took place in the Security Council meeting on 25 September 1997 with regard to the situation in Africa. President Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe and the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, said that it was necessary

> "to find a solution to the dispute between Libya, the United States of America and the United Kingdom over the Lockerbie tragedy. ... Now that Libya has agreed that the two accused Libyans can be tried under Scottish Law, by Scottish judges but in a third country or at the International Court of Justice, we feel that this offer should receive your serious consideration so that matters can move forward."(*S/PV.3819, p. 4*)

All other States members of the Security Council have endorsed President Mugabe's statement and only the United States and the United Kingdom rejected it. Can we, after all this, claim that the difference is between Libya and the Security Council? Of course, we cannot. The Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, acts on behalf of the Member States and not on behalf of the United States and the United Kingdom. The Security Council must express the will of the international community and not that of those two countries, which regrettably enjoy permanent membership and enjoy the right of veto, and impede the Security Council from responding to the international will.

The United States and the United Kingdom claim that their rejection of a trial in a neutral country is based on their domestic laws, which do not permit this. At the same time, they demand that other countries turn suspects over to them for trial. Do they not know that there is domestic legislation preventing the surrender of suspects to them? Do they think that their domestic law is superior to that of other countries?

The representative of the United States spoke of terrorism. If I were to reiterate all the acts of terrorism committed by the United States world-wide, I would never be able to finish within my 10-minute limit. Suffice it to remind the international community of a very important episode: the United States has, more than once, perpetrated against my country more grave acts. Using its naval and air forces, it committed a brutal raid on 15 April 1986 against the President of my country and his office and against residential areas in Tripoli and Benghazi. Dozens of women, children and elderly people were martyred as they slept at night.

The United States cannot provide one proof of what it calls Libyan terrorism, but there is testimony and proof by the dozen of United States terrorism against Libya. The 15 April 1986 raid is not a mere suspicion, as in the case of the United States with regard to two Libyan citizens, but a reality that took place and whose effects persist in the form of graves and the remains of buildings. The effects of the bombs and the rockets are still there.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.